PHI DELTA KAPPAN

SEPTEMBER 1979

Aftermath of Proposition 13

GARY HOBAN

The Need for New Talent In Teaching

W. TIMOTHY WEAVER

☐ NO R. Freeman Butts, Historian of Education

☐ YES John E. Coons, Author of the California Proposal

Plus
The 11th Annual Gallup Poll of The Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools

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The Eleventh Annual Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools

by George H. Gallup

Jim Kalett/Photo Researchers

Once again, the Kappan *is privileged to publish the full report of an attitude survey conducted by the Gallup Poll. The Gallup education polls are now an established source of reliable information concerning trends in opinion about significant school questions. For school officials, the polls are valuable in at least two important ways. They alert decision makers to overall public reaction to a variety of school programs and policies. And they serve as a national benchmark against which local attitudes may be measured.*

If local officials wish to employ questions asked in the Gallup education surveys, they are welcome to do so. The questions are not copyrighted. Moreover, no limitations are placed upon the use of information contained in this report, beyond customary credit to source and observance of the usual canons of accuracy and completeness of quotation.

The Charles F. Kettering Foundation, through its affiliate, /I/D/E/A/, is now financing the education poll, while Phi Delta Kappa has been authorized to publish it in full before distribution to other media. We are grateful to B. Frank Brown and Samuel G. Sava of /I/D/E/A/ and Kettering for their strong support of the project. — SME

Purpose of the Study

Results of the eleventh annual survey of the attitudes of the American people toward their public schools are reported in the following pages. Funding for this survey has been provided by /I/D/E/A/, the Institute for Development of Educational Activities, Inc., an affiliate of the Charles F. Kettering Foundation. Each year an effort is made to cover current issues of prime concern to both educators and the public. New as well as trend questions are included in this and every survey.

To insure that this survey would embrace the most important issues in the field of education, the Kettering Foundation sent letters to educators across the nation asking for their views. Following this, a selected group of educators and government representatives met with representatives of Gallup and /I/D/E/A/ to evaluate preliminary questions and to suggest other possible items for inclusion in the survey.

The panel members this year were: Gregory R. Anrig, commissioner of education, Massachusetts State Department of Education; Edward Brainard, chairman, Colorado State Committee, North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, University of Northern Colorado, Greeley; B. Frank Brown, director, /I/D/E/A/ Information and Services Program, Melbourne, Florida; Gregory Caras, principal, Longfellow I.G.E. Magnet School, Dayton, Ohio; Stanley Elam, director of publications, Phi Delta Kappa, Bloomington, Indiana; Phyllis Erickson, representative and chairman, Education Committee, Washington State House of Representatives; Jerome M. Hughes, senator and chairman, Education Committee, Minnesota State Senate; George Iannacone, superintendent, Vernon (New Jersey) Township Public Schools; J. L. Jones, superintendent, Dade County Public Schools, Miami, Florida; Margaret Labat, superintendent, Evanston (Illinois) Township High School District 202; Joan Orr, senator and chairman, Education Committee, Iowa State Senate; A. Craig Phillips, superintendent of public instruction, North Carolina State Department of Public Instruction; Nellie B. Quander, principal, Hybla Valley School, Alexandria, Virginia; Vincent E. Reed, superintendent, Washington, D.C., Public Schools; Samuel G. Sava, special assistant to the president, Charles F. Kettering Foundation, Dayton, Ohio; Leonard Price Stavisky, assemblyman and chairman, Education Committee, New York State Assembly; Olin Stratton, superintendent, Highland (Illinois) Public Schools; Ralph Turlington, commissioner of education, Florida State Department of Education; Carolyn Warner, superintendent of public instruction, Arizona State Department of Education.

We wish to thank these individuals for their valuable help.

Research Procedure

The Sample. The sample designed for the current survey is a modified probability sample of the nation. It includes a total of 1,514 adults (18 years of age and older). All interviewing was conducted in the home, by personal interview, in all sections of the country and in all types of local communities. A complete description of the sample will be found at the end of this report.

Time of Interviewing. The fieldwork for this study was carried out during the period of 3-7 May 1979.

The Interviewing Form. All the questions included in the survey instrument were pretested by the staff of interviewers maintained by the Gallup organizations.

The Report. In the tables that follow, the heading "Parochial School Parents" includes not only parents of students who attend parochial school but also parents of students who attend private or independent schools. This heading is used because parochial school students outnumber private or independent school students.

To avoid confusion in the case of parents with more than one child in school, respondents were asked to think only of their eldest child in school when answering each question.

Due allowance must be made for statistical variation, especially in the case of findings for small groups where relatively few respondents were interviewed.

The findings of this report apply only to the U.S. as a whole and not to individual local communities. Local surveys, using the same questions, can be conducted to determine how local areas compare with the national norm.

Major Problems Confronting the Public Schools in 1979

Once again, the American public perceives the perennial problem of discipline as the most important problem facing the public schools. Either the public schools have found no way to deal effectively with this problem or the public is not yet aware of measures that are being tried.

Approximately one person in four names discipline as the most important problem when asked in an "open" question, "What do you think are the biggest problems with which the public schools in this community must deal?"

Answers to this question in the 1979 survey are virtually the same as those reported a year ago. When comparisons are made with earlier years, trends become clearer. In the 11-year span in which these annual surveys have been conducted, the greatest changes have come in respect to the issue of integration/busing, which is named as a major problem by significantly fewer respondents. Similarly, fewer people now complain of inadequate school facilities. On the other hand, a significant increase has occurred in the number who cite the curriculum and low standards as a major problem. This year, for the first time, a sufficient number of those interviewed cite "government interference" and "teachers' strikes" to place them on the list of problems.

The question was:

What do you think are the biggest problems with which the *public* schools in this community must deal?

	National Totals %	No Children In Schools %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents* %
Lack of discipline	24	24	26	32
Use of dope/drugs	13	13	14	7
Lack of proper financial support	12	12	12	4
Poor curriculum/poor standards	11	10	11	17
Difficulty in getting good teachers	10	9	12	12
Integration/busing (combined)	9	9	7	15
Crime/vandalism	4	4	3	1

	National Totals %	No Children In Schools %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Large school/too many classes/overcrowding	4	4	6	6
Pupils' lack of interest/truancy	4	3	4	4
Parents' lack of interest	3	3	4	3
Teachers' lack of interest	3	2	4	1
Drinking/alcoholism	2	2	3	1
Mismanagement of funds/programs	2	2	2	2
School board policies	2	1	2	—
Communication problems	2	2	2	2
Government interference	2	1	1	6
Lack of proper facilities	2	2	2	—
Transportation	1	1	2	1
Parents' involvement in school activities	1	1	1	2
Teachers' strikes	1	1	1	3
Too many schools/ declining enrollment	1	1	1	1
Problems with administration	1	1	2	1
There are no problems	3	1	8	2
Miscellaneous	5	5	7	5
Don't know/no answer	16	20	7	5

(Figures add to more than 100% because of multiple answers.)
*Includes parents of students attending private and independent schools as well as parochial (nonpublic) schools.

1979 Ratings of the Public Schools

Another slight drop has been registered in the public's rating of the public schools since the 1978 survey. This year a total of 34% give the public schools a rating of A or B. Last year the comparable figure was 36%. However, the percentage who give the public schools either a D or Fail rating this year is 18%; last year it was 19%.

When sampling and statistical factors are taken into account, it can be concluded that there has been no significant change in the public's views during the last year. Moreover, it is likely that the downward trend recorded in the years since this question was initiated in 1974 may have come to an end. This hypothesis, of course, can only be determined by future surveys.

The question that has been asked yearly since 1974 reads as follows:

Students are often given the grades A, B, C, D, and FAIL to denote the quality of their work. Suppose the *public* schools themselves, in this community, were graded in the same way. What grade would you give the public schools here — A, B, C, D, or FAIL?

	National Totals					
Ratings Given the Public Schools	1979 %	1978 %	1977 %	1976 %	1975 %	1974 %
A rating	8	9	11	13	13	18
B rating	26	27	26	29	30	30
C rating	30	30	28	28	28	21
D rating	11	11	11	10	9	6
FAIL	7	8	5	6	7	5
Don't know/ no answer	18	15	19	14	13	20

Parents who have children attending nonpublic (independent/parochial) schools continue to give the public schools the lowest ratings. The highest ratings come from parents of children now attending the public schools, as the following table shows:

Rating	National Totals %	No Children In Schools %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
A	8	7	12	7
B	26	22	37	14
C	30	28	31	40
D	11	11	10	21
FAIL	7	7	7	9
Don't know/no answer	18	25	3	9

Analysis of the data by other groups comprising the adult population suggests the following conclusions, based upon this study and previous studies:

- The public schools are held in lowest esteem by blacks living in the central cities of the North.
- Younger adults are more critical of the schools than their elders.
- Better-educated citizens give the schools lower ratings than the more poorly educated.
- Public schools are held in highest esteem by residents of small towns and rural communities.
- Southern blacks rate their public schools higher than Northern blacks.
- Persons living in the West give their public schools a lower rating than persons living in other major areas of the nation.

Further breakdowns follow:

	A %	B %	C %	D %	FAIL %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
NATIONAL TOTALS	8	26	30	11	7	18
Sex						
Men	8	25	29	11	7	20
Women	8	27	29	12	7	17
Race						
White	9	26	30	11	6	18
Nonwhite	6	22	24	12	16	20
Age						
18 - 29	5	21	36	15	5	18
30 - 49	8	28	32	12	11	9
50 & over	11	28	22	7	5	27
Community Size						
1 million & over	9	20	21	14	12	24
500,000 - 999,999	13	21	29	12	5	20
50,000 - 499,999	5	23	34	13	7	18
2,500 - 49,999	10	29	30	10	4	17
Under 2,500	8	33	32	8	5	14
Central city	6	14	31	15	13	21
Education						
Grade school	13	24	18	6	7	32
High school	7	26	31	12	8	16
College	8	27	32	13	5	15
Region						
East	10	25	29	10	7	19
Midwest	8	31	31	11	4	15
South	7	26	29	9	8	21
West	7	20	28	18	10	17
Region/Race						
Northern white	9	27	29	12	6	17
Southern white	8	25	32	8	6	21
Northern black	7	16	30	15	13	19
Southern black	5	30	17	10	17	21

How to Improve the Public's Respect For the Public Schools

After respondents in the present study rated the public schools in their community, they were then asked:

In your opinion, what are the main things a school has to do before it can earn an A?

There is general agreement on the seven steps listed

below, in order of mention:

1. Improve the quality of teachers (23%).
2. Increase discipline (20%).
3. Set higher standards (17%).
4. Give students more individual attention (16%).
5. Put more emphasis on the basics — the three Rs (12%).
6. Better management and direction of schools (7%).
7. Establish closer relations with parents (6%).

Among the other suggestions mentioned are: update the curriculum, have smaller classes, eliminate drugs and alcohol, teach more life skills, and upgrade school facilities.

Other Ways to Improve Respect For the Public Schools

Reports of the findings in this series of surveys have frequently pointed out that the persons who are most familiar with the public schools — parents whose children are now enrolled in these schools — hold the public schools in greater esteem than those persons less familiar with them. Further evidence that greater involvement and familiarity with the public schools result in a more favorable attitude is to be found in the ratings given the schools by those persons who have attended a lecture, meeting, or social occasion in any local school building during the past year.

	National Totals %	Those Who Have Attended School Affair %
A rating	8	11
B rating	26	41
C rating	30	35
D rating	11	7
FAIL	7	4
Don't know/no answer	18	2

Although there has been much discussion in education circles regarding greater citizen involvement in the public schools, and greater use by citizens of public school buildings, survey evidence indicates that little progress has been made during the last 10 years. When a question from the 1969 survey was repeated in the present survey, the results indicate that no greater number of adults are now attending lectures, meetings, or social occasions in the local schools than in past years.

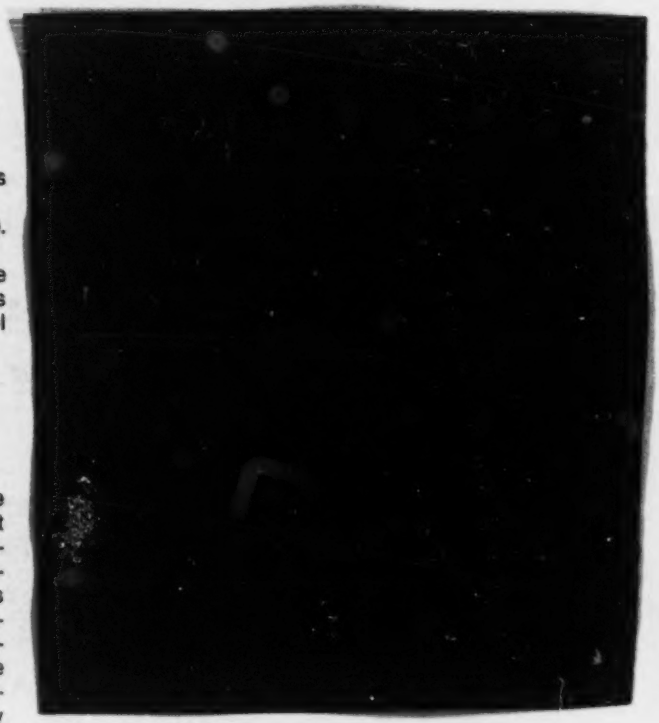
This is the question asked in 1969 and repeated in the present survey:

Have you attended any lecture, any meeting, or any social occasion in any local school building during the last year?

	Yes %	No %	Can't Recall %
1979 survey	33	64	3
1969 survey	37	59	4

Further breakdowns follow:

	National Totals %	No Children In Schools %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes, have attended	33	19	65	46
No	64	77	34	52
Can't recall	3	4	1	2



	Yes %	No %	Can't Recall %
NATIONAL TOTALS	33	64	3
Sex			
Men	31	66	3
Women	35	62	3
Race			
White	34	63	3
Nonwhite	23	72	5
Age			
18 - 29	27	70	3
30 - 49	53	46	1
50 & over	19	76	5
Community Size			
1 million & over	31	63	6
500,000 - 999,999	27	71	2
50,000 - 499,999	29	69	2
2,500 - 49,999	35	62	3
Under 2,500	39	59	2
Central city	21	75	4
Education			
Grade school	12	84	4
High school	31	66	3
College	46	50	4
Region			
East	27	70	3
Midwest	40	57	3
South	28	69	3
West	37	60	3

Best Source of Information About the Local Schools

The local newspaper is still the best single source of information about the local schools. The other major media — television and radio — have improved their coverage of school news, but the local newspaper still has a large advantage, according to those interviewed in the 1979 survey.

Information about the schools comes from many sources besides the media, such as children now in school, neighbors, school meetings, school personnel, and one's own personal involvement in school activities.

As information sources, these are fully as important as the news media.

The information sources, revealing changes between 1969 and 1979, are shown below:

	Information Sources	
	1979 National Totals %	1969 National Totals %
Local newspaper	37	38
Radio & TV	21	16
School publications/ newsletters	7	8
Word of mouth/personal involvement, etc.	70	60
Don't know/no answer	8	6

(Figures add to more than 100% because of multiple answers.)

This open question was put to respondents in 1979:

What is your best source of information about the local public schools?

	National Totals %	No Children In Schools %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Local newspaper	37	38	33	48
Local TV	16	19	11	10
Local radio	5	7	3	3
School publications/ newsletters	7	5	12	6
Word of mouth/personal involvement, etc.	70	58	98	61
Don't know/no answer	8	11	1	6

(Figures add to more than 100% because of multiple answers.)

Cost Per Child Per School Year

As the costs of education continue to increase, chiefly because of inflation, the cost per child per school year may become the unit for comparing one school with another.

To discover how many citizens presently think in these terms, the following survey questions were asked:

Do you happen to know what it costs per child, per school year, in the local public schools? How much?

Only one person in eight (12%) claimed to know the cost. When members of this group were asked to name a figure, they gave an amount that is substantially less than the estimated figure for the nation.

Tax Foundation researchers estimate that the cost per child for the year ending June 1977 was $1,782. Allowing for a 9.5% yearly increase, which has been the average increase since 1966, the national figure at the time of the present survey should be approximately $2,100.

The median figure arrived at by those who said they knew the cost is $1,200 — an amount substantially less than the national estimate.

Below are the figures cited:

Under $700	17%
$700-$1,299	40
$1,300 - $1,899	18
$1,900 - $2,499	10
$2,500 & over	15
	100%

School costs obviously vary widely from community to community and from state to state. However, since the respondents who said they knew the costs of their local public schools represent a fairly accurate cross section of the nation, their answers can be compared with the national average, a figure that includes not only salaries and operating expenses but capital costs as well.

It can be argued that if the actual cost per child per school year, and more particularly the cost per school day (which comes to approximately $11, based upon a school year of 184 days), were more widely known, then greater attention would be given to public school education. Truancy might be reduced when parents and pupils translated each school day and each class period into dollars lost when students are absent or unprepared.

On the other hand, it can be argued that since the actual costs of public school education are substantially higher than the figure the public has in mind, greater pressures would be brought upon the schools to cut costs, which could result in a lowering of the quality of education.

Is Education Better or Worse Than in Your Day?

Respondents in the 1973 survey were asked if they thought the present generation of schoolchildren receives a better or worse education than they did in their day. The same question was asked in the present survey with significantly different results.

In 1973 those interviewed said, by a large majority, that children today get a better education. Asked to tell why, they cited the following reasons: a wider variety of subjects, better facilities and equipment, better teaching methods, better teachers, and better opportunities for all ethnic groups. Those who held the opposite opinion (that education today is not so good as in earlier times) gave these reasons: less discipline, lower standards, less interest on the part of teachers and students, and too many irrelevant subjects in the curriculum.

The views of the minority have, since 1973, become the views of the majority. A similar change in attitude has been registered in the rating of schools beginning in 1974, when, for the first time in this series, a five-point scale was employed to rate the schools. In 1974 a total of 48% gave the public schools a rating of A or B. In 1979 the comparable survey figure is 34%.

The greatest change in the period between 1973 and 1979 occurred in the Western states, where views are virtually the opposite of those held in 1973. In 1973, 54% said that the schools were better; 25% said they were worse. In 1979, 27% say they are better; 51% say they are worse.

Another significant change has been found in the views of the better-educated citizens. Respondents who have attended college say the schools are worse than in their day by a margin of 46% to 36%. In 1973 they held the opposite view.

On the other hand, blacks and respondents who have had little education, as well as those who live in small towns and rural areas, hold the view that education is better today than in their time.

Perhaps of greatest comfort to those who believe that education is better today is the finding that parents who have children now attending school say that

today's education is better, and by the fairly substantial margin of 53% to 39%.

This question was asked:

As you look on your own elementary and high school education, is it your impression that children today get a better — or worse — education than you did?

	Education Today Compared with Earlier Times			
	National Totals %	No Children in Schools %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Schools better today	41	36	53	36
Worse	42	43	39	54
No difference	9	11	6	6
Don't know/no answer	8	10	2	4

Further breakdowns:

	Better %	Worse %	No Difference %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
NATIONAL TOTALS	41	42	9	8
Sex				
Men	36	45	10	9
Women	45	40	8	7
Race				
White	39	43	10	8
Nonwhite	49	37	6	8
Age				
18 - 29	38	40	14	8
30 - 49	41	47	7	5
50 & over	42	40	8	10
Community Size				
500,000 & over	36	43	10	11
50,000 - 499,999	36	48	8	8
2,500 - 49,999	47	36	11	6
Under 2,500	47	39	10	4
Education				
Grade school	51	34	5	10
High school	40	43	10	7
College	36	46	9	9
Region				
East	40	40	11	9
Midwest	43	41	9	7
South	47	40	7	6
West	27	51	13	9

A Cap on School Budgets

Despite the prevailing sentiment in the nation that local taxes are too high, more persons nationwide disapprove than approve of putting a top limit on the amount of money included in the annual budgets of the public schools. Nationally, the vote is approximately 4-3 against such a limit. As the following table shows, only parents whose children now attend nonpublic schools approve of a cap, but even for this group the vote is fairly close.

The question:

Would you approve or disapprove of a law in this state that would put a top limit on the amount of money which could be included in the local public schools' annual budget?

	National Totals %	No Children in Schools %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Approve limit	33	35	28	44
Disapprove limit	42	38	54	40
Already have such a law	4	3	5	2
Don't know/no answer	21	24	13	14

Respondents who approve or disapprove were then asked why they felt this way. Those who approve of a law placing a limit on local school budgets give these reasons in order of frequency: 1) there is too much waste; 2) a limit is necessary or there will be no end to increases in spending; and 3) taxes are already too high.

Those who disapprove of such a law give these reasons in order of mention: 1) quality should be the main concern, not cost; 2) flexibility in budgeting is needed in a time of inflation; and 3) schools differ widely in their financial requirements depending on local factors.

Further breakdowns:

	Approve %	Dis-approve %	Already Have Such A Law %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
NATIONAL TOTALS	33	42	4	21
Sex				
Men	33	45	4	18
Women	34	40	3	23
Race				
White	34	43	4	19
Nonwhite	25	41	5	29
Age				
18 - 29	32	51	3	14
30 - 49	31	48	5	16
50 & over	35	32	4	29
Community Size				
1 million & over	25	37	6	32
500,000 - 999,999	37	41	3	19
50,000 - 499,999	38	43	2	17
2,500 - 49,999	29	48	5	18
Under 2,500	37	43	2	18
Education				
Grade school	34	20	3	43
High school	38	39	4	19
College	24	61	3	12
Region				
East	33	38	4	25
Midwest	39	39	5	17
South	28	46	2	24
West	33	47	4	16

Money for Men's vs. Women's Sports

Many colleges and universities complain that if the federal government requires them to spend as much money on women's sports as on men's sports, they will lose many thousands of dollars on sports events at the box office. In the case of high school sports, relatively few harbor such a fear. A substantial majority believe that the same amount of money should be spent to support girls' athletics as boys'. In fact, there is little difference in the views of the various groups, as evidenced by the table below.

The question:

The federal government may require all high schools to spend the same amount of money on women's sports as on men's sports. Do you approve or disapprove of this plan?

	National Totals %	No Children in Schools %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Approve	61	62	61	55
Disapprove	29	27	32	35
Don't know/no answer	10	11	7	10

State Board Examinations

Widespread agreement is found for state board examinations for teachers. Such a test would be in addition to meeting college requirements for a teacher's certificate. In short, teachers would be required to meet the same criteria as doctors, lawyers, and dentists.

The question asked in the survey was this:

In addition to meeting college requirements for a teacher's certificate, should those who want to become teachers also be required to pass a state board examination to prove their knowledge in the subject(s) they will teach before they are hired?

	National Totals %	No Children In Schools %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes, they should	85	84	87	84
No	9	10	9	7
Don't know/no answer	6	6	4	9

A second question dealing with state board examinations sought to find out if teachers should be tested every few years to see if they are keeping up-to-date with developments in their field. Here again, public sentiment overwhelmingly favors such a requirement.

The question asked was:

After they are hired, do you think teachers should be tested every few years to see if they are keeping up-to-date with developments in their fields?

	National Totals %	No Children In Schools %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes, they should	85	85	85	86
No	10	10	12	5
Don't know/no answer	5	5	3	9

Not only should teachers be tested every few years but, in the public's opinion, administrators should also be required to meet the same test.

The next question asked:

Should school administrators be tested every few years to see if they are keeping up-to-date?

	National Totals %	No Children In Schools %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes, they should	85	85	84	80
No	10	10	13	10
Don't know/no answer	5	5	3	10

Dealing with the Handicapped

The public favors putting *mentally* handicapped children in special classes of their own. At the same time, people approve of putting *physically* handicapped children in the same classrooms with other students.

Those who should be most concerned are parents who now have children enrolled in either public or parochial/independent schools. And they vote overwhelmingly for putting mentally handicapped children in special classes as well as approve of placing physically handicapped children in the same classrooms with their own children.

The first question was stated in these words:

In your opinion, should mentally handicapped children be put in the same classrooms with other students or should they be put in special classes of their own?

The Mentally Handicapped

	National Totals %	No Children In Schools %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Put with other students	13	13	16	10
Put in special classes	77	77	76	77
Don't know/no answer	10	10	8	13

The second question asked:

Should physically handicapped children be put in the same classrooms with other students or should they be put in special classes of their own?

The Physically Handicapped

	National Totals %	No Children In Schools %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Put with other students	53	51	60	54
Put in special classes	36	38	32	35
Don't know/no answer	11	11	8	11

National Youth Service

A national youth service program has been supported by the American public for many years. Legislators have feared that voting for such a plan would cost them some votes and have failed thus far to pass such legislation, even though a national service program has worked well in other nations. In addition to removing young persons from the ranks of the unemployed, such a plan would probably provide enough qualified recruits to meet present military requirements without reinstituting the draft.

The plan suggested in the present survey would require any young person under the age of 20 who is unemployed and not attending school or college to choose among three alternatives: 1) take vocational or on-the-job training, 2) perform public service, or 3) perform military service.

The questions:

As you may know, the United States has a youth unemployment problem. It has been suggested that we develop a national youth service which would *require* every young man under the age of 20 who is unemployed, and not attending school or college, to take vocational or on-the-job training, or to perform public or military service until he reaches the age of 20. Would you approve or disapprove of such a national youth service plan for young men? Would you approve or disapprove of such a national youth service plan for young women?

National Youth Service for Young Men

	National Totals %	No Children In Schools %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Approve national service program	67	68	65	66
Disapprove	27	24	31	30
Don't know/no answer	6	8	4	4

National Youth Service for Young Women

	National Totals %	No Children In Schools %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Approve national service program	62	62	60	58
Disapprove	31	29	35	39
Don't know/no answer	7	9	5	3

Approval of this program for both young men and young women who are unemployed and not attending school or college is found among all major segments of the population.

Further breakdowns:

National Service

	For Young Men			For Young Women		
	Approve %	Dis-approve %	DK/ NA %	Approve %	Dis-approve %	DK/ NA %
NATIONAL TOTALS	67	27	6	62	31	7
Sex						
Men	63	30	7	57	35	8
Women	71	23	6	66	27	7
Race						
White	66	27	7	60	32	8
Nonwhite	71	25	4	71	24	5
Age						
18 - 29	56	39	5	54	41	5
30 - 49	68	28	4	63	32	5
50 & over	72	18	10	65	24	11
Community size						
1 million & over	69	23	8	65	26	9
500,000 - 999,999	71	25	4	66	27	7
50,000 - 499,999	70	25	5	64	31	5
2,500 - 49,999	63	27	10	57	33	10
Under 2,500	63	32	5	58	36	6
Education						
Grade school	74	14	12	70	18	12
High school	69	25	6	63	30	7
College	61	36	3	55	40	5
Region						
East	71	23	6	65	28	7
Midwest	63	31	6	58	35	7
South	68	26	6	63	30	7
West	65	27	8	60	31	9

Essential Subjects

Each generation has a different view of the importance of particular subjects included in the public school curriculum. To determine which are regarded as most essential today, survey respondents were asked about 11 subjects. They judged each as "essential" for all students or "not too essential."

The question asked:

Public schools can teach many different things. Will you tell me in the case of each of these high school subjects, whether you regard it as essential for all students, or not too essential?

Below are the results, with subjects ranked according to the percentage saying it is "essential."

National Totals

	Essential %	Not Too Essential %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
Mathematics	97	1	2
English grammar & composition	94	3	3
Civics/government	88	8	4
U.S. history	86	11	3
Science	83	14	3
Geography	81	16	3
Physical education	76	21	3
Interdependence of nations — foreign relations	60	32	8
Music	44	52	4
Foreign language	43	53	4
Art	37	58	5

The opinions of respondents with children now attending school agree almost exactly with the opinions of those who have no children in school. Mathematics and English top the list for both groups, and the order in which other subjects are regarded as essential is the same.

The results below indicate the percentages saying "essential":

Essential Subjects

	National Totals %	No Children In Schools %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Mathematics	97	96	97	96
English grammar & composition	94	94	96	96
Civics/government	88	88	89	90
U.S. history	86	85	89	83
Science	83	83	85	82
Geography	81	81	81	80
Physical education	76	75	79	68
Interdependence of nations — foreign relations	60	62	57	58
Music	44	45	43	39
Foreign language	43	44	40	44
Art	37	39	35	30

It should be pointed out that the question asked about *all* students. Art, music, and foreign language are still very important for many young people.

Because of the new emphasis on global education and the growing conviction that the nations of the world are interdependent, this subject was included in the list. Interestingly, it was regarded as essential by 60% of those included in the survey.

The public attaches much greater importance to geography as a subject than is currently accorded to it in many school systems. Tests of knowledge in geography show an amazing lack of information in this field on the part of students throughout the nation.

Fewer Courses or Many

The public, by a small majority, prefers that public high schools concentrate on fewer subjects rather than offer students a wide variety of courses.

The back-to-basics movement has been widely favored, especially by those who are familiar with declining scores on standardized tests. On the other hand, offering a wide variety of courses is seen by some as a way to interest students who otherwise might become dropouts.

Here is the question asked:

Public high schools can offer students a wide variety of courses, or they can concentrate on fewer basic courses such as English, mathe-

matics, history, and science. Which of these two policies do you think the local high school(s) should follow in planning their curriculum — a wide variety of courses or fewer but more basic courses?

Fewer Courses vs. a Wide Variety

	National Totals %	No Children in Schools %	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Wide variety	44	44	44	43
Fewer courses	49	47	53	53
Don't know/no answer	7	9	3	4

Substantial differences are found on this question when the results are examined by age, by education, and by section of the country. Young adults, those in the age group 18 to 29, vote for a wide variety of courses — almost the opposite of individuals over 50.

College-educated respondents also favor a wide variety of courses over concentration on a few. Persons living in the Western states prefer fewer but more basic courses over a wide variety, whereas people living in the Eastern states are evenly divided.

Further breakdowns:

	Wide Variety %	Fewer Courses %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
NATIONAL TOTALS	44	49	7
Sex			
Men	40	52	8
Women	47	46	7
Race			
White	43	50	7
Nonwhite	52	40	8
Age			
18 - 29	57	39	4
30 - 49	44	52	4
50 & over	33	55	12
Community size			
1 million & over	48	44	8
500,000 - 999,999	47	46	7
50,000 - 499,999	43	51	6
2,500 - 49,999	43	49	8
Under 2,500	40	52	8
Education			
Grade school	32	54	14
High school	43	50	7
College	51	44	5
Region			
East	47	47	6
Midwest	43	48	9
South	45	48	7
West	36	55	9

Suggestions for Improving Community Relations

It is generally agreed that education in the local public schools can be achieved best when parents, the community, and the schools all work together. The question arises as to how to get these three groups to work together in the best interests of the schools.

To see what thoughts the public, including parents, has to offer, the following open question was included in the survey:

What suggestions would you make to get parents, the community, and the school to work together to improve education in the local public schools?

Survey respondents had many suggestions, which can be summarized as follows:

1. *Better communication.* The local community cannot be expected to take a keen interest in the schools if people know little about them. The media should carry much more school news, especially news about the achievements of students and the schools, the means being taken to deal with school problems, and new developments in education. Media research has shown that there is far greater interest in schools and in education than most journalists think. At the same time, the schools should not rely solely on the major media. Newsletters are important to convey information that the media cannot be expected to report.

2. *More conferences.* Many of those included in the survey recommend that more conferences about the progress and problems of students be held with parents — both father and mother. Special monthly parent meetings and workshops are also suggested as a way to bring teachers, administrators, and parents together. Survey respondents also recommend courses for parents and special lectures. PTA meetings, some suggest, could be more useful to parents if school problems and educational developments were given more attention.

3. *Invite volunteers.* Some respondents suggest that, if more members of the community could serve in a volunteer capacity in the classrooms and elsewhere in the school, they would further better community understanding of the problems faced by the schools. In addition, their involvement in school operations would increase their own interest in educational improvement at the local level.

4. *Plan special occasions.* Interest in the schools and in education could be improved, some suggest, by inviting members of the community — both those who have children in the schools and those who do not — to attend meetings, lectures, and social events in the school buildings. As noted in another section of this survey report, only one person in three across the nation attended a lecture, meeting, or social occasion in a school building during the last year. In 1969, when the same question was asked, a slightly higher proportion said they had attended a lecture, meeting, or social occasion in a school building.

Private schools, and virtually all colleges and universities, plan many occasions to bring their alumni back to their campuses in order to keep them interested in the school. The public schools could adopt the same policy to their advantage, inviting not only alumni to attend such events but members of the community who have attended schools in other areas.

The Amount of Schoolwork Required

Parents of children now enrolled in school were asked to judge whether students today are given less work than they were given 20 years ago and, if so, why they thought this is the case. Both those who have children in the public schools and parents of parochial/independent school students say they agree with an educator who claims that schoolchildren today are given about one-third less work to do.

The question:

An educator claims that children are not achieving as well in school today as they did 20 years ago because they are given about one-third less work to do in school and after school. Do you think chil-

dren are assigned less work today? (If yes) Why is this so?

	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Yes, less work today	51	59
No	38	22
Don't know/no answer	11	19

The reasons offered to explain why less work is assigned students today fall into these main categories, listed here in the order of frequency. Some typical comments are included.

1. *Teachers are lazy.* "They are too lazy to go over written homework."
2. *Teachers are not interested.* "Teachers aren't as interested in the progress of students as they were in my time."
3. *A new philosophy.* "We are living in a permissive society. Don't do anything if you don't want to."
4. *Easy courses.* "Many students pick easy courses, like art, so that they won't have to do homework."
5. *Extracurricular activities.* "Students are so busy with school activities that they have no time for their studies."
6. *Better methods.* "Children cover more ground and learn more during regular class periods."

Absenteeism

Absenteeism is a growing problem in many schools. One aspect of this problem is the awareness of parents of their children's absence from school.

In the present survey we questioned parents of children now enrolled in school about the number of days they thought their children had been absent (from the beginning of school in September until the time of the survey in early May); whether their children could be absent without their knowing it; and, finally, if the school promptly notifies them about each absence. In the case of each question, the respondent was asked about the eldest child in school.

The first question:

About how many days has your child (the eldest now in school) been absent since school opened last September?

Days Absent	All Parents %
0 - 5 days	56
6 - 10 days	21
11 - 15 days	9
16 - 20 days	3
21 days & over	4
Don't know/no answer	7

The second question:

Do you think it is possible for your child to be absent without your knowledge?

	Yes %	No %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
Parents whose eldest child is 12 years & under	15	84	1
Parents whose eldest child is 13 years & over	47	53	—

The third question:

Does the school let you know promptly about each absence?

	Yes %	No %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
Parents whose eldest child is 12 years & under	50	37	13
Parents whose eldest child is 13 years & older	57	36	7

Career Guidance

An open question in the present survey sought to determine what help, if any, schools today are giving students in choosing careers.

Parents whose eldest child in school is 14 years of age or older were asked the following question:

What help, if any, has the school given your child in choosing a career?

The responses indicate that, at least from the parents' viewpoint, rather little guidance has been offered in the matter of careers. Guidance, the respondents say, mostly concerns recommended subjects, help with personal problems, and, in the case of older students, scholarships and advice about choosing colleges and universities. In some instances, parents add, career guidance is not offered until the junior or senior year of high school.

Counselors are warmly praised for their help, but most of those questioned say that their child has received no career guidance. In fact, only one person in five specifically mentions that his or her child was given help in selecting a career.

Student Reports: Could They Be More Helpful?

Parents of children now enrolled in the public schools and parents whose children now attend parochial/independent schools were asked the following question about their eldest child in school:

Do the reports you receive on the progress of your child (eldest) in school provide you with the information you would like to have, or should the reports contain additional information that would be helpful?

	Public School Parents %	Parochial School Parents %
Satisfied with present reports	62	67
Dissatisfied	32	13
Don't know/no answer	6	20

Some differences are found between those who have younger children and those with older children in respect to their satisfaction with the reports they receive.

	Parents with Children	
	12 Years & Under %	13 Years & Over %
Satisfied with present reports	73	64
Dissatisfied	25	35
Don't know/no answer	2	1

All respondents who said that they were dissatisfied with present reports were asked what kind of information they would like to have included that they are not presently receiving in the reports.

Below, in order of mention, are their suggestions:

1. More detailed information — not just grades — regarding the student's weaknesses, abilities, problems; why he/she is doing poorly; and where the student stands in the class.
2. Information about the student's relations with others, both teachers and students.
3. What can be done at home to help the student.
4. More detailed information about the student's behavior in and out of the classroom, including such things as smoking, use of drugs, etc.
5. Some parents mention that they would like more frequent reports and immediate notification when their child is doing poorly or failing.

What Do You Like Best About Your Child's School?

Parents with children enrolled in public school or in parochial/independent school were asked their opinions about the school their eldest child currently attends.

The question:

What do you like most about the school your child attends?

The responses to this open question fall into the following categories, listed in order of frequency:

1. *Good teachers.* They take a personal interest in the child and give him/her individual attention.
2. *High standards.* The school does a good job of teaching the basics, has a high scholastic rating, keeps students busy, and gives them lots of homework.
3. *Special programs.* The school offers a wide variety of programs for the gifted, the learning disabled, the college oriented, and those interested in shop courses or vocational training.
4. *Discipline.* The school does not permit children to "fool around." Students attend strictly to their work, and teachers command and receive respect.

Among the other reasons given for liking the school their eldest child attends are these: small classes, proximity to home, good communication between school and home, and good principal.

What Do You Like Least About Your Child's School?

About the same picture is found when parents are asked what they like least about the school their eldest child attends, except that discipline assumes first place in mentions, and external factors such as distance from home, the condition of the school building, and the like are also mentioned.

The question asked:

And what do you like least about it?

Here, in order of mention, are the things parents dislike:

1. *Lack of discipline.* Teachers and school administrators have little control over students. Lack of security in school.
2. *Low standards.* Not enough emphasis is placed upon the basics. Students do not have enough work to do.
3. *Teachers.* They are not interested in the students, fail to motivate them, are not innovative.
4. *Condition of school building.* It is old and run-down; classrooms are dingy.
5. *Overcrowding.* Too many students in classes.
6. *Too far from home; children bused.*
7. *Vandalism; use of marijuana, alcohol, and drugs by students.*

Would You Like Another Public School Better?

Parents with children presently enrolled in a public school were asked if they would like to send their child to a different public school and, if so, why.

Approximately one parent in eight (12%) said he/she would prefer another public school to the one the eldest child is presently attending. When the age of the eldest child was considered, almost exactly the same response came from those whose eldest child is age 12 or younger as in the case of those age 13 and older.

The question:

Would you like to send your child to a different public school?

	Yes %	No %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
Parents whose eldest child is 12 years & under	12	78	10
Parents whose eldest child is 13 years & over	11	86	3

When parents were asked to give their reasons for preferring another public school, about half said, "For a better education." Other reasons mentioned include dissatisfaction with facilities, dissatisfaction with the administration of the school, preference for a school closer to home, and the desire to have their child attend a smaller school.

Preschool Help

Parents with children who have not yet started school or kindergarten were asked:

Do you think the school could help you in any way in preparing your child for school?

Those parents who presently have no children in school represent the group most eager to have preschool help for their children. Parents who now have older children already enrolled in the public schools were less interested, although nearly four in 10 said they would like such help.

In interpreting the following figures, it should be borne in mind that the number of respondents with preschool children is very small; therefore, ample allowance should be made for error due to sample size.

	Could School Help With Preschool Child?		
	Yes %	No %	Don't Know/ No Answer %
Parents who presently have no children in school	53	34	13
Parents with one or more children in public school	37	53	10
Parents with one or more children in parochial school	40	40	20

When those who said they would like help were asked, "What could the school do?" the suggestion offered most often was to distribute a pamphlet or booklet telling in detail what parents should do to prepare the child for school. As one respondent put it, "I should like to know exactly what they expect of the child, such as the ABCs, numbers, and other areas of learning."

Another suggestion frequently made was to invite parents and the child to visit the school to see just what goes on in a typical day. Some respondents thought it would be a good idea to designate a day when a preschool child could actually sit in the kindergarten class with other children to see what it is like.

Still others suggested that a regular preschool program, such as Head Start, be made part of the education system. Many respondents said that such a preschool program already exists in their community.

The Public's Conception of the Ideal School

The surveys in this 11-year series have included many questions dealing with the public's ideas about the ideal school. In the present survey, three questions have a bearing upon this: how schools can best obtain an A rating from the public; what parents like most and least about the school their child attends; and, finally, whether parents would like to send their child to a different public school and why.

The results of these questions and of those included in earlier surveys make it possible to construct the public's idea of the ideal school.

Schools reflect the needs and goals of society, and as these change so do the public's views. Presently the public's concept of the ideal school can be described by requirements that they regard as most essential, as follows:

1. Teachers should be well qualified and should be required to pass state board examinations before they are hired as well as at regular intervals thereafter. In their teaching role they should take a personal interest in the progress of each one of their students, interest their pupils in the subjects they teach, and motivate them to progress at an acceptable rate.

2. Discipline should be strict. Specific rules of behavior should be agreed upon by the school and by parents and then should be rigorously applied.

3. The curriculum should emphasize the basics, particularly mathematics, English grammar and composition, civics/government, U.S. history, science, and geography. In addition, the curriculum should offer vocational training for students who do not plan to go on to college.

4. Students should be given more work to do in school and after school.

5. Better communication should be established with parents and the community through greater use of local media — newspapers, radio, television — and through school newsletters and publications. More conferences should be held between teachers and parents regarding the progress of students.

6. Courses or seminars should be organized for parents to help them help their children in school. Among the many topics that parents would like most to discuss are these: what to do about drugs, smoking, alcohol use; how to develop good work habits; how to encourage reading; how to increase interest in school and school subjects; how to help the child organize homework; how to improve the child's school behavior; how to deal with the child's emotional problems.

7. The ideal school would give much more attention to the selection of careers than is presently the case. Days should be set aside each year to review career opportunities, perhaps with local professional and business people taking part. School guidance counselors should give more help in selecting careers.

8. Schools should try to interest a majority of the residents of the school district in attending, at least once a year, a lecture, meeting, or social occasion held in the school building. Schools should ask for community volunteers to help with school affairs and operations. And, finally, schools should see that alumni retain their interest in the school.

COMPOSITION OF THE SAMPLE

Analysis of Respondents

Adults	%
No children in schools	68
Public school parents	28*
Parochial school parents	7*

*Total exceeds 32% because some parents have children attending more than one kind of school.

Sex	%
Men	48
Women	52

Race	%
White	88
Nonwhite	12

Age	%
18 - 24	16
25 - 29	10
30 - 49	34
50 & over	38
Undesignated	2

Occupation	%
Business & professional	28
Clerical & sales	7
Farm	3
Skilled labor	16
Unskilled labor	23
Non-labor force	20
Undesignated	3

Political affiliation	%
Republican	21
Democrat	42
Independent	31
Other	6

Income	%
$20,000 & over	29
$15,000 - $19,999	18
$10,000 - $14,999	21
$ 7,000 - $ 9,999	8
$ 5,000 - $ 6,999	10
$ 3,000 - $ 4,999	7
Under $3,000	5
Undesignated	2

Region	%
East	26
Midwest	28
South	28
West	18

Community size	%
1 million & over	20
500,000 - 999,999	11
50,000 - 499,999	26
2,500 - 49,999	17
Under 2,500	26

Education	%
Elementary grades	15
High school incomplete	15
High school complete	34
Technical, trade, or business school	6
College incomplete	15
College graduate	15
Undesignated	*

*Less than 1%

THE DESIGN OF THE SAMPLE

The sampling procedure is designed to produce an approximation of the adult civilian population, age 18 and older, living in the U.S., except for those persons in institutions such as prisons or hospitals.

The design of the sample is that of a replicated probability sample,

down to the block level in the case of urban areas and to segments of townships in the case of rural areas. Approximately 300 sampling locations are used in each survey. Interpenetrating samples can be provided for any given study when appropriate.

The sample design included stratification by these four size-of-community strata, using 1970 census data: 1) cities of population 1,000,000 and over; 2) 250,000 to 999,999; 3) 50,000 to 249,999; 4) all other population. Each of these strata was further stratified into seven geographic regions: New England, Middle Atlantic, East Central, West Central, South, Mountain, and Pacific. Within each city-size/regional stratum, the population was arrayed in geographic order and zoned into equal-sized groups of sampling units. Pairs of localities were selected in each zone, with probability of selection of each locality proportional to its population size in the 1970 census, producing two replicated samples of localities.

Within localities so selected for which the requisite population data are reported, subdivisions were drawn with the probability of selection proportional to size of population. In all other localities, small definable geographic areas were selected with equal probability.

Separately for each survey, within each subdivision so selected for which block statistics are available, a sample of blocks or block clusters is drawn with probability of selection proportional to the number of dwelling units. In all other subdivisions or areas, blocks or segments are drawn at random or with equal probability.

In each cluster of blocks and each segment so selected, a randomly selected starting point is designated on the interviewer's map of the area. Starting at this point, interviewers are required to follow a given direction in the selection of households until their assignment is completed.

Interviewing is conducted at times when adults, in general, are most likely to be at home, which means on weekends, or if on weekdays, after 4 p.m. for women and after 6 p.m. for men.

Allowance for persons not at home is made by a "times-at-home" weighting procedure rather than by "call-backs." This procedure is a standard method for reducing the sample bias that would otherwise result from underrepresentation in the sample of persons who are difficult to find at home.

The prestratification by regions is routinely supplemented by fitting each obtained sample to the latest available Census Bureau estimates of the regional distribution of the population. Also, minor adjustments of the sample are made by educational attainment by men and women separately, based on the annual estimates of the Census Bureau (derived from their Current Population Survey) and by age.

SAMPLING TOLERANCES

In interpreting survey results, it should be borne in mind that all sample surveys are subject to sampling error, i.e., the extent to which the results may differ from what would be obtained if the whole population surveyed had been interviewed. The size of sampling error depends largely on the number of interviews.

The following tables may be used in estimating the sampling error of any percentage in this report. The computed allowances have taken into account the effect of the sample design upon sampling error. They may be interpreted as indicating the range (plus or minus the figure shown) within which the results of repeated samplings in the same time period could be expected to vary 95% of the time, assuming the same sampling procedure, the same interviewers, and the same questionnaire.

The first table shows how much allowance should be made for the sampling error of a percentage:

Recommended Allowance for Sampling Error of a Percentage

	In Percentage Points (at 95 in 100 confidence level)* Sample Size						
	1,500	1,000	750	600	400	200	100
Percentages near 10	2	2	3	3	4	5	7
Percentages near 20	2	3	4	4	5	7	9
Percentages near 30	3	4	4	4	6	8	10
Percentages near 40	3	4	4	5	6	8	11
Percentages near 50	3	4	4	5	6	8	11
Percentages near 60	3	4	4	5	6	8	11
Percentages near 70	3	4	4	4	6	8	10
Percentages near 80	2	3	4	4	5	7	9
Percentages near 90	2	2	3	3	4	5	7

*The chances are 95 in 100 that the sampling error is not larger than the figures shown.

The table would be used in the following manner: Let us say a reported percentage is 33 for a group that includes 1,500 respondents. We go to the row for "percentages near 30" and across to the column headed "1,500." The number at this point is 3, which means that the 33% obtained in the sample is subject to a sampling error of plus or minus three points. Another way of saying it is that very probably (95 chances out of 100) the average of repeated samplings would be somewhere between 30 and 36, with the most likely figure the 33 obtained.

In comparing survey results in two samples such as, for example, men and women, the question arises as to how large a difference between them must be before one can be reasonably sure that it reflects a *real* difference. In the tables below, the number of points that must be allowed for in such comparisons is indicated.

Two tables are provided. One is for percentages near 20 or 80; the other for percentages near 50. For percentages in between, the error to be allowed for is between those shown in the two tables:

Recommended Allowance for Sampling Error Of the Difference

	In Percentage Points (at 95 in 100 confidence level)			
TABLE A	**Percentages near 20 or near 80**			
Size of Sample	**750**	**600**	**400**	**200**
750	5			
600	5	6		
400	6	6	7	
200	8	8	8	10
TABLE B	**Percentages near 50**			
Size of Sample	**750**	**600**	**400**	**200**
750	6			
600	7	7		
400	7	8	8	
200	10	10	10	12

Here is an example of how the tables would be used: Let us say that 50% of men respond a certain way and 40% of women respond that way also, for a difference of 10 percentage points between them. Can we say with any assurance that the 10-point difference reflects a real difference between men and women on the question? The sample contains approximately 750 men and 750 women.

Since the percentages are near 50, we consult Table B, and since the two samples are about 750 persons each, we look for the number in the column headed "750," which is also the row designated "750." We find the number 6 here. This means that the allowance for error should be six points and that in concluding that the percentage among men is somewhere between four and 16 points higher than the percentage among women, we should be wrong only about 5% of the time. In other words, we can conclude with considerable confidence that a difference exists in the direction observed and that it amounts to at least four percentage points.

If, in another case, men's responses amount to 22%, say, and women's 24%, we consult Table A, because these percentages are near 20. We look in the column headed "750" and see that the number is 5. Obviously, then, the two-point difference is inconclusive.